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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Lebanon, Syria, Iraq,
Palestinian Territories (12/15)

11. Summary: Syrian newspapers continued to criticize the second report of the International Investigation Commission into the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafiq al-Hariri and cited Lebanese criticism of the report from the "National Unity Forum," that described the Mehlis report as "empty of evidence" and said that it "has confused the Lebanese judicial." Papers also reported the funeral of Lebanese MP Gebran Tueni. Hasan M. Yousef, an op-ed writer in government-owned Tishreen, considered Tueni's assassination "as part of a conspiracy against both Lebanon and Syria." All papers reported the visit of Arab League SecGen Amr Mousa to Beirut on the first leg of a tour that will take him on to Syria to defuse the "dangerous" situation between the two neighbors. Subsequent to his meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Al-Saniora, Mousa told reporters "I am on an urgent diplomatic mission to defuse the dangerous situation" between Beirut and Damascus. Mousa added "I cannot watch and let the situation deteriorate between Lebanon and Syria and reach an explosive level," he said. Mousa said he had "lengthy and practical discussions with Saniora which were positive and constructive". But he denied media reports he was carrying an initiative linked to calls by Lebanon to convene an international court for the murder of former Lebanese PM Rafiq al-Hariri.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"In protest of the demand for an international tribunal, ministers of the Amal Movement and Hizbollah persist in suspending their participation in the cabinet. Franjeh calls for stopping exploitation of martyrs' blood"
(Government-owned Tishreen, 12/15)

"Arab League SecGen confers with Lahoud and Al-Saniora: Vicious forces endeavor to sabotage Lebanese-Syrian relations" (Government-owned Tisheen, 12/15)
"President Emile Lahoud of Lebanon: Lebanon is keen to maintain the best of relations with Syria. Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa: There are evil forces working

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to undermine Syrian-Lebanese relations" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/15)
"'National Unity Forum' rejects ready accusations: The Mehlis report is empty of evidence and has confused the Lebanese judicial" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/15)
"Israeli warplanes continue to violate Lebanese airspace" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/15)
"Scores of Syrians staged a sit-in in front of International Committee of the Red Cross in Damascus in solidarity with Syrian prisoners in Israeli jails, rejecting the Israeli decision to annex Golan" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/15)
"Four Palestinians killed, 5 wounded in Gaza Strip by Israeli gunfire" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/15)
"A UN official expresses confidence that Iraqi elections will run smoothly" (Government-owned Syria Times, 12/15)

"Occupation forces expand settlements in the West Bank. Nine Palestinians killed and injured in Israeli shelling of Gaza" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/15)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Mehlis' Second Report"
Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (12/15): "It is natural for Mehlis' second report to go in the same direction as the first so as to save face after the revelations about key gaps in major testimony...."
"It is perfectly natural for Mehlis to insist on what he said in his first dramatic episode, and to proceed with this scenario and its bloody plot until the [American] cowboy on his horse takes off on a new invasion...."
"You Lebanese must beware of those have who turned into daggers in the back of Lebanon and Syria. These people see

sieges and occupations as divine missions and as ten commandments that begin in Baghdad and do not end in Beirut...."

"empty of evidence" and said that it "has confused the Lebanese judicial."

Papers also reported the funeral of Lebanese MP Gebran Tueni. Hasan M. Yousef, an op-ed writer in government-owned Tishreen, considered Tueni's assassination "as part of a conspiracy against both Lebanon and Syria."

All papers reported the visit of Arab League SecGen Amr Mousa to Beirut on the first leg of a tour that will take him on to Syria to defuse the "dangerous" situation between the two neighbors. Subsequent to his meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Al-Saniora, Mousa told reporters "I am on an urgent diplomatic mission to defuse the dangerous situation" between Beirut and Damascus. Mousa added "I cannot watch and let the situation deteriorate between Lebanon and Syria and reach an explosive level," he said.

Mousa said he had "lengthy and practical discussions with Saniora which were positive and constructive". But he denied media reports he was carrying an initiative linked to calls by Lebanon to convene an international court for the murder of former Lebanese PM Rafiq al-Hariri.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Looking for Honesty"

Hasan M. Yusuf, an op-ed commentator, wrote in government-owned Tishreen (12/15) "I have no information about the criminals who assassinated colleague martyr Gebran Tueni.... But I can say for sure that this dirty criminal operation is part of the major conspiracy that targets Lebanon and Syria and seeks to demolish the entire Middle East and build the US Greater Middle East on its rubble....

"In this new Middle East, Arabs would disintegrate into warring tribes, sects, and ethnic minorities while the Zionist entity would emerge as the only big and dominant power...."

"With No One to Observe or Watch"

Ahmad Hamadah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra wrote (12/15): "If the United States practiced all forms of torture and humiliation in public prisons like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, how can we imagine the disastrous picture in the secret American prisons in Europe?

"The ugliness of the situation in those prisons must be beyond imagination....

"If international judicial and legal organizations failed to do anything for the inmates in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, although their detention was illegal and in total contradiction of human rights, what can they do with prisons that have no known address and from which there is not a single piece of information about the number of detainees or the charges for which they were detained and tortured?

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